THE AUTHORITY OF Church-Guides Asserted in a SERMON

Preach'd before our Late GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN King CHARLES II. At *Whitehall*, *Octob.* 17. 1675.

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The Preface to the Reader.

Reader,

THIS Sermon being the laſt which I had the Honor to preach before our late Gracious Sovereign of bleſſed and immortal Memory; and having been ſo well approv'd of by Him, that I receiv'd his Commands twice for the printing of it, and his Defence of it after it was publiſhed, I now again preſent to publick View, yet not without ſome apprehenſion of danger; for if, notwithſtanding the Royal Command and Defence of that Sagacious Prince, I could not at that time eſcape the ſevere ſtrokes of ſome Potent Men, who from the very moment it was firſt preach'd, by ſecret Arts endeavour'd my ruine, and became my Enemies for no other reaſon, but becauſe I told them the truth: I have little reaſon to expect better uſage now, being to my unſpeakable grief deſtitute of that Royal Patronage.

The Deſign of it is to vindicate that Church-Authority, which our Lord, before he went into his far Country, in a moſt ſolemn manner conferr'd upon his Apoſtles, and which was to deſcend upon their Succeſſors, and to be continued in the Governors and Guides of the Church unto the end of the World; to leſſen, if not render uſeleſs this Sacred Authority, eſpecially that part of it, which conſiſts in expounding the Scriptures, in teaching and guiding the Flock; ſome modern Divine (for rea-

ſons beſt known to themſelves) have advanc'd the Perſpicuity of Scripture to that degree, that not only the leſs difficult part thereof, but even the δυσνόητα themſelves are become eaſie and intelligible to every Mechanick Reader. And it may ſeem ſtrange, that this pretended Clearneſs of Scripture, unknown to thoſe Illuſtrious Fathers, who writ in the firſt and ſucceeding Ages of Chriſtianity, who with indefatigable Labour, painful Watchings, and inceſſant Recourſe to the Spirit of Truth, endeavoured to explain the deep Myſteries thereof, ſhould never be diſcovered until theſe laſt Centuries, and then made uſe of to uſher in, and ſupport thoſe peſtilent Schiſms which happened in the Weſtern Churches, and is indeed ſet as a fatal Bar to fruſtrate all the Methods of Re-union: and yet ſtranger, that theſe Diſcoverers ſhould be ſo wilfully blind, as not to diſcern, that nothing is more clearly reveal'd, or more expreſly ſet down in Holy Writ, than the Authority here contended for, if the infallible and concurrent Teſtimony of the Evangeliſts may be thought of any moment in the caſe.

God forbid the Bread of Life ſhould be denied to the Children of the Goſpel Covenant; but whether the great Maſter of the Houſhold has not appointed Spiritual Fathers to be the Stewards and Diſpenſers of this Heavenly Food, or left the Children to be their own Carvers, ought to have been more maturely conſider'd; for this Bread of Life, which is the Word of God, is by St. Paul compar'd to a two-edged Sword, and if that be put into the hands

hands of unskilful Managers, it may prove both fatal to themſelves, and deſtructive to others.

I ſhall not here trouble you with a review of thoſe Complaints, occaſioned by the dire Hereſies, which ſoon followed upon the firſt Tranſlation of the Bible into the Engliſh Tongue; ſince the Divine Writings cannot be tranſlated into too many Languages, and ſince after the Tranſlation, the Supreme Authority might have hindred the miſchiefs which inſued, by reſtraining the promiſcuous reading of them, and indulging that Priviledge to thoſe only who ſhould be licens'd thereunto by the Governours of the Church.

But certainly thoſe men had no very good Deſign, nor a due Honour for the Divine Oracles, who firſt expos'd their myſterious meaning to the Judgment of every vulgar Capacity; and yet I would willingly entertain ſo much Charity for them, as to believe the firſt Inventors did not foreſee the dangerous Conſequences of their own Principle; for from hence it naturally follows, in the Firſt place, That there is no neceſſity of Church-Guides for directing Chriſtians in neceſſary Faith. Secondly, From hence follows a contempt of their Function, at leaſt as to this part of it, (for who will regard that Authority which is made uſeleſs;) Thirdly, An Inundation of all thoſe wild Opinions, which either Malice or Ignorance can betray men into. Fourthly, The multiplying of Sects and Hereſies, without any due Means left for the ſuppreſſing them, ſince every ſincere Endeavourer may equally plead

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the Truth of Scripture in justification of his Opinion.

This one Principle has turned our Jerusalem, *which was once a City at Unity within it self, into a* Babel, *not of Languages, (but what is worse) a Confusion of the grossest Errors which ever infested the Church since the Foundation of Christianity; and since Latitudinism in Principles, is evermore accompanied with Libertinism in Practice, Schism in the Church begets Sedition in the Monarchy, and an Erastian in the one, proves a Republican in the other. To this one Principle may be chiefly ascrib'd all the Fatal mischiefs of the late unnatural Wars, and the dreadful Confusions intended by the last Fanatick Conspiracy, which we so narrowly escap'd, that we can scarce yet think our selves secure from the danger of it; for since the Translation of the Bible into our Language, and the promiscuous Reading of it, what Schismatick ever wanted a Text, of his own interpreting, to countenance his Schism? or Rebel, to authorize his Rebellion?*

The Peace and Unity of the Catholick Church, ought to be dearer to every good Christian, than the greatest temporal Blessings, or even Life it self: How far this has been obstructed by the envenom'd Writings and Erastian Principles of some modern Controvertists, I wish we had not too just cause to lament; and that in their Transports of indiscreet Zeal, and even inhuman Passions, they had not wounded the Catholick through the sides of the Roman Church; for not contented to throw off an Universal Supremacy, unduly challenged by

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St. Peter's *Succeſſors, as the Prerogative of the firſt Apoſtolical See, they have denied that Primacy of Order,* that Exordium Unitatis *which is both conſiſtent with* St. Cyprian's, Hoc erant utiq; & cæteri Apoſtoli, quod fuit Petrus, pari conſortio præditi & honoris & poteſtatis, &c. *allow'd by the moſt genuine Sons of the Church of* England, *and which is neceſſary for the ſupporting the Eccleſiaſtical Hierarchy, and without which that Unity of the Church, which the Holy Father ſo earneſtly contends for, cannot ſo well be preſerv'd; not contented with this Degradation of his Holineſs, they have proceeded further, and made him the Antichriſt, the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, notwithſtanding all the Phænomena of the Apocalyptical falſe Prophet, do ſo exactly agree to* Mahomet; *as the ingenious* Oxford-Paraphraſt *has fully and learnedly made out in his Annotations on the* 2 Theſſ. Chap. 2. *not contented to juſtifie our Separation from the Church of* Rome, *upon the account of Innovations, Corruptions, and impoſing them as neceſſary Conditions of Communion, and ſo becoming guilty of cauſal Schiſm, they have repreſented all the Members of that Church, both Paſtors and People, both in Doctrin and Practice, guilty of Heatheniſh, and worſe than the moſt ſottiſh Heatheniſh Idolatry, ſo foul a Charge, and ſo injurious to that Charity which the Church of* England *hath always been renown'd for, that I hope the Authors of it may have Grace to retract, and make ſatisfaction for that Scandal which is thereby given even to our*

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common Christianity. And I have always wondred how it ever could enter into the heart of any man to believe, and publickly maintain, that so great a number of Christian Professors, eminent for Learning, and Austerity of Life, could be guilty of so damnable an Apostasie: concerning the mischiefs of this Charge, take the Judgment of the Learned Thorndike, *in the last words of the first Chapter of his just Weights and Measures:* And as they who justifie the Reformation by charging the Pope to be Antichrist, and the Papists Idolaters; so, on the other side, they who over-charge the Reformation to be Hereticks, make themselves thereby Schismaticks before God.

We hope no ingenuous Person, though an Adversary, will think the worse of the true Sons of the Church of England, for the uncharitable Opinions of some particular Men, descended perhaps from dissenting Parents, educated in dissenting Times, and who never yet sufficiently conquered the Prejudices of their Education; if they had, they would not maintain such Erastian Positions as these, (viz.) *That Christ never appointed any particular Form of Church-Government, but left it arbitrary, and dependent on the Civil State. That Christ Jesus is not to be preach'd, if the Magistrate and the Law of the Country forbid it. That the King has a Power to execute all Pastoral Offices, & devolve it on others, with many others of the like dangerous consequence, which that valiant Champion of Church-Power,* Mr. Lowth, *has charg'd upon them, and learnedly*

learnedly made good the Charge; whereas concerning the laſt of theſe Poſitions, neither his preſent M. nor any of his Predeceſſors, by virtue of their Eccleſiaſtical Supremacy, ever thought themſelves indow'd with any other Power, but that of Nurſing Fathers; neither do's the true ſence of the Oath inveſt the Civil Magiſtrate with any other Power in Spiritual Matters, than what is purely external and coercive, if Biſhop Bramhal, and others, may be thought of equal Authority with the Authors there tax'd; let them conſider in this very juncture of time the conſequence of their own Poſitions, and then lay their hands upon their mouths, and be for ever after ſilent: or if they pleaſe to look backward, let them conſider what miſchiefs the Fathers of the Church had brought upon themſelves, had they been of this Opinion, when Julian and Conſtantius reign'd; had they ſpent as much time in defending the Church of England, as they have in oppoſing the Church of Rome, they would have prov'd themſelves as good Subjects to the Father of their Country, and as dutiful Sons to their Mother the Church; had they given a true account of ancient Church-Government, inſtead of imbroyling us with Irenicum's and Weapon-ſalves, they had purchas'd as much Renown to themſelves, and more Benefit to Chriſt's Catholick Church; then might we hope to ſee the Miſchiefs of Separation diſplay'd, without a Preface of ſuch Conceſſions as manifeſtly tend to the deſtruction of Uniformity: and if it be a ſign of a luke-warm and ungenerous temper to deſert a Friend in affliction, that cruel juncture of time in which thoſe Conceſſions were made,

does no ways extenuate the Presumption, for it deserves no milder a Name; for any private Doctor, let his Fame be never so great, to assume to himself a more than Papal Power, to dictate ex Cathedra, *prescribe to the Church, and unfix what has been establisht by her venerable Authority, generally receiv'd and approv'd by all her true Subjects; then might we not despair to behold and admire the Beauty of the Church of* England *in all her heights of Decency and Order; her Doctrins believ'd; her Liturgies daily frequented; her Sacraments frequently celebrated; her Rubricks duly observ'd; her neglected Discipline restored; her Censures dreaded; her Governours religiously obey'd: then might we not despair to see our Controversies in Religion manag'd with all due deference to the Authority of ancient Fathers and Councils, general Tradition, and the consent of the Catholick Church, and consequently with a design to maintain universal Truths, rather than our own private Opinions; to confute mens Errors, rather than expose their Persons; and a return of that Christian Spirit which enobled the Writings of* Cassander, Grotius, Forbes, *and many other Illustrious Conciliators, the decay whereof hath widen'd our Breaches, and obstructed that Union which ought to be the earnest desire, & endeavor of every good Christian.*

If the Church of England *do's not flourish as much in our days, as ever it did since the first Reformation, the fault must be in our selves, since His Majesty, in his gracious Declaration, has past his Royal Word for the preservation of the Government both of Church and State, as*

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it is now by Law eſtabliſhed, and we cannot in Honor, or Duty require more, ſince his Word has always been as Sacred and inviolable to him, as his Perſon and Prerogative ought to be to us; wherefore inſtead of fomenting needleſs Fears and Jalouſies concerning our Religion, which even in a Coffee-Houſe is dangerous, but from the Pulpit do's naturally riſe into Diſorders and Tumults; the people are to be taught the Duties of Submiſſion, Humility, and Obedience to their Governors, both Civil and Spiritual, that as Religion is not to be propagated by Force, ſo neither is it lawful to take up Arms againſt lawful Authority in defence of it; they are to be inſtructed in the Duties of Paſſive Obedience, and non-reſiſtance, from the Doctrines of the Scripture, the Principles of the Church of England, *and the Practice of the Primitive Chriſtians, when under the ſevereſt Perſecutions.*

In the ſame Declaration He is pleas'd further to add, That He knows the Principles of the Church of England *are for Monarchy, and the Members of it have ſhew'd themſelves good and loyal Subjects; therefore he will always take care to defend and ſupport it: ſo that out of his abundant Goodneſs and Clemency, he has confirmed his Word by the ſureſt Tyes of Intereſt and Princely Gratitude.*

It pleaſed the Almighty (in whoſe hands are the Fate of the greateſt of Potentates) to call to Heaven his deareſt Brother, and to leave him the deepeſt Mourner in the Nation, in that very period of time, when they might have promis'd themſelves a ſecure enjoyment of earthly Bleſ-

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ſings; for had not that glorious Monarch, like Moſes, by an invincible Patience and Magnanimity withſtood the murmurings and ingratitudes of a rebellious People, freed us from the Slavery and Tyranny of our Egyptian Taſk-maſters, brought us out of a Wilderneſs of Confuſion, and placed us within the proſpect of a Canaan of Peace and Order; and yet to his lawful Succeſſor, the mighty Joſhua, Providence decreed the full poſſeſſion of thoſe Bleſſings, which he, the lamented Moſes, only liv'd to have a ſight of.

And what may we not promiſe to our ſelves under his moſt auſpicious Reign, and in nothing more auſpicious, than in the peaceable devolution of the Crown upon his Head; after ſo many bold and wicked Attempts to cut off his Succeſſion, this ſeems no leſs miraculous than his Predeceſſor's Reſtauration; may his Subjects learn from hence, That Kings are of Divine Right, and dread the Vengeance of that God by whom they reign; may they never forget the miſeries they have eſcap'd, nor grow weary of the benefits they are ſure to enjoy under his wiſe and ſteady Conduct; may his Reign be long and proſperous; and to compleat his Happineſs, may all his People give him the ſame dutiful Obedience now he is King, which he ſo religiouſly paid to his Sovereign, when he was the higheſt of Subjects; and to ſay no more, may he live to accompliſh thoſe glorious things for this Nation, for which he ſeems to be deſign'd, by that ſpecial Providence which has attended him through the whole courſe of his life, and has now plac'd him on the Imperial Throne.

2 Pet. Chap. 3. ver. 16.------

In which are ſome things hard to be Underſtood, which they that are unlearned, and unſtable, Wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, unto their own Deſtruction.

THE *clearneſs of Scripture, in all points neceſſary to Salvation, to all ſuch as ſincerely endeavour to believe, and find out the True Senſe thereof:* as it is a *Principle* which ſuits very well with the nature and deſign of a Rule; with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God in propounding it as ſuch; and hath been urged with ſome ſucceſs againſt thoſe, who plead a neceſſity of having One Supreme infallible Judge, to decide and determine all Controverſies, which ſhall happen to ariſe concerning that Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints: Whoſe Deciſions and Determinations, ſay they, ought to be Receiv'd, by all the Sons of the Church [for as much as the Church is the ſame in all Ages] with equal Aſſent and Veneration with thoſe of the Apoſtles: And this to be the only ſure way, to keep the *Unity of the Faith* in *the Bond of Peace.*

Whereby on the other hand 'tis ſaid, New *Articles* of *Faith* may be daily impoſed; the *Doctrines* of men paſs

for the *Commandments of God*, and humane *Inventions* receive the ſtamp of Divine *Authority*; whereby men ſeem precluded the genuine methods of coming to the Knowledge of the Truth, and thoſe Precepts of *ſearching* the *Scriptures*, *ſeeking* the *Kingdom* of Heaven, *trying* the *Spirits*, are rendred Ineffectual; whereby men are ſo far from being able to give an *account* of their *Faith*, that their *Underſtandings* are enſlav'd by a Principle of *blind Obedience*; ſo far from being led into the ways of Religion, by the *cords of men*, that they ſeem rather to be driven like Beaſts, and acted like Puppets, as 'tis phras'd by a late Author.

As this *Doctrine* of the *Clearneſs of Scripture*, hath prov'd ſucceſsful to the beating down the pretences to an abſolute *Infallibility*, and uncontroulable Soveraignty over the Conſciences of men: ſo on the other hand hath it mightily embolden'd the *Patrons of Liberty*, not only to deſpiſe their Eccleſiaſtical Superiors, to throw off all obedience to Chriſt's Miniſters; [Whom He, notwithſtanding, a little before his Return to his Fathers Court, for the further negotiating, and advancing the affairs of His Church, Anointed and Ordain'd to perform the Apoſtolical Offices, of *Preaching* the *Goſpel*; *Remitting Sins*; *Inflicting Cenſures*; Miniſterially *conferring the Holy Ghoſt*; *Deciding Controverſies*, and *Adminiſtring the Sacraments* in his ſtead, here on earth till his ſecond coming] but likewiſe to invade their Function, uſurp their Sacred Calling; eſpecially that part of it which conſiſts in Preaching and Expounding the Word.

For, ſay they, ſince 'tis confeſs'd, the Scriptures are ſufficiently clear to all unprejudiced minds, ſuch as are free from the clogs of Paſſion and Intereſt; Why ſhould theſe pretended *Miniſters of Chriſt* take ſo much upon them? Are not all the *Congregation Holy, and Learned, as well as they?* Are they the only *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt?*

Ghoſt? And doth the *Spirit of Prophecy reſide* ſolely in their Breaſts?

During the Diſpenſation of *Moſes*, 'tis confeſs'd, there was a neceſſity of an *Aaron*; all along under the Legal œconomy, the Prieſts Lips did preſerve Knowledge; and likewiſe during the Reign of the Prophets, there was an appropriate Miniſtry. But the caſe is quite different under the Goſpel, God having made clearer diſcoveries of himſelf, and poured out more liberally of his Spirit upon all Fleſh. The ſenſe of the Law that was Doubtful, Typical and Myſterious; the Prophecies were induſtriouſly couch'd under dark Parables, and deliver'd in obſcure ſayings. But then the light, the glorious light of the Goſpel, as 'twas univerſal, 'twas likewiſe ſo clear, that any one that runs may read. Why then ſhould we not aſſert that *Liberty* wherewith Chriſt hath made us free? and ſince we have a Command, to work out our own Salvation, Why ſhould we pin our Faith upon other mens ſleeves?

Thus theſe men, under the goodly Pretences of *Chriſtian Liberty*, become enſlav'd to ſpiritual pride and conceitedneſs; plead the Prerogative of the Goſpel, in prejudice of Chriſt's own Ambaſſadors; urge, for their own private Conceptions, clearneſs of Scripture, to their own Confuſion; and pry ſo long into the Doctrines of Theology, till at length they light on thoſe *hidden Myſteries*, which they being *Unlearned* and *Unſtable*, Wreſt unto their own Deſtruction. The way thus prepar'd, my Text yet leads me into theſe following Conſiderations.

1. *That the clearneſs of Scripture doth no ways leſſen the Authority, or take away the Neceſſity of Spiritual Guides.*

2. *That though the Scriptures be clear in themſelves, yet private men, abandoning* their *Lawful Guides, and following their own Corrupt Fancies, may deprave and diſtort them to their own Deſtruction.*

 3. *That*

3. *That for preventing Miſtakes from riſing, and ſuppreſſing Errors when riſen, 'tis the duty of Private men to ſubmit their Judgments in matters of Religion, to the Determinations of thoſe whom God hath conſtituted to be their Spiritual Guides and Governours; unleſs it manifeſtly appear, that ſuch Determinations are contrary to Gods Word.*

I. I begin with the Firſt, *That the Clearneſs of Scripture*, &c. For, if the Scriptures be ſo Clear, and Self-evident, as is pretended, then may men with greater ſecurity rely on the Directions of their *Guides*; and they have the leſs Reaſon to ſuſpect their Conduct in thoſe things, wherein they themſelves being Judges, they cannot be miſtaken, if they ſincerely attend them; the clearneſs of the Law is ſo far from leſſening the Authority, that it rather conciliates reverence to the Judge. The Profeſſion of Phyſick doth not therefore become uſeleſs, becauſe the Aphoriſms of *Hippocrates* contain the neceſſary Rules for Health; and may be underſtood by thoſe who are capacitated, and will take the pains to do it.

The Scriptures they do clearly contain the *Doctrines of Salvation*: And one way, whereby Chriſt prov'd himſelf the true Meſſias, was by anſwering that Character the Prophets had given of Him, that the Poor ſhould have the Goſpel Preached unto them, *i. e.* Men as of ſmall Capacities, and leſs Eſtates, ſo of humble and teachable Diſpoſitions; men who are Poor in Spirit, as well as in Fortune: And the perfection of the *Chriſtian Law* conſiſts in this, that therein God hath preſcribed a reaſonable ſervice. The Rules of Life, which are therein laid down, are not ſo much the product of abſolute Power and Soveraignty; as the Reſult of infinite Mercy and Goodneſs. And theſe His Attributes led Him to conſult the wants, and commiſerate the Neceſſities of the meaneſt of Mankind: And therefore, as when

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He took upon Him to deliver Man, He did not abhor the Virgins Womb; and that He might become a Sacrifice for Sin, was content to be disarray'd of His own Eternal Glory, to take upon Him the Form of a Servant, and to humble Himself to the Death, the shameful Death of the Cross: so likewise when He took upon Him the Office of a *Teacher*, by a wonderful Condescent, He accommodated His *Doctrines* to the Reason and humane Affections of His Auditors. His Laws obtain'd as much by their suitableness to our Natures, as the Authority of the Speaker. When He preach'd His *Divine Sermon* to the Multitude, He did not amuse them with Mystical Theology, or torture their Understandings with profound Subtilties; but as He was the *Brightness of his Fathers Glory*, and the *express Image of His Person*; so He declar'd the Law of God in a most Plain and Perspicuous manner.

Mahomet indeed, that grand Impostor, was well Advis'd to pen his Alcoran in swelling Words, and mystical Phrases; and as in some things to Restrain, so in others to Indulge the sensual Appetite: For by this Stratagem, that sottish People with whom he had to do, were content to part with their natural Right, to gain an Unlawful Freedom, and to Admire what they were never like to Understand.

But our new and perfect *Law-giver Christ Jesus*, having no other design but the Salvation of Souls, and being every way Adorn'd for so noble a Purpose; though He made the *Gate Narrow*, and the *Path Strait*; yet He hath promised it shall be Open'd to all that Knock; and none, unless Wilfully, need mistake the Way which leads to Eternal Life.

But then, because He knew, there was no *Rule* so plain, but it might be *Mistaken*; no *Precept* so clear, but it might be *Perverted*; no *Doctrine* so pure, but it might be

be *Corrupted*: Becauſe He foreſaw there would ariſe falſe Prophets, and falſe Teachers, whoſe buſineſs it would be to Seduce the *Ignorant*, and Debauch the *Credulous*: Becauſe He foreſaw a perpetual Succeſſion of *Gnoſticks*, who, in all Ages, would ſet up the *Dagon* of their own laſcivious Fancies, in oppoſition to the *Ark* of His Covenant; and be ſo audacious, as even to confront Divine Revelations with carnal Reaſoning; therefore to obviate, and prevent, the miſchiefs of ſuch *grievous Wolves*; before He took His Journey into his far Country, out of a tender care of that *Flock*, which He had purchas'd with his Blood, He appointed *Overſeers*, and *Paſtors* of his *Flock*; committed to them, and them only, the care of *Feeding* his *Flock*; amplified their *Commiſſion* with the like *Authority*, which he had receiv'd from his Father; promis'd to be with them unto the End of the World; and to aſſiſt them with that *Spirit*, which ſhould guide them into all Truth.

If then the Scriptures be ſo clear, as to be underſtood even by the *Multitude*, then much more by the *Diſciples in general*: If by the Diſciples in general, much more by the *College* of the *Apoſtles*, who were His ſpecial Favourites, and of his Cabinet-counſel: If the Nations, to whom theſe Miniſters in Chief, and Plenipotentiaries for Chriſt, made known the *Will* of *God*, were throughly inſtructed for the Kingdom of Heaven; then much more both they, and their Succeſſors, upon whom they, in obedience to their Maſters Command, conferr'd the ſame Paſtoral power which they had receiv'd from Him.

The Clearneſs then of Scripture cannot reaſonably be urg'd, in Prejudice of *Chriſt's Miniſters*; for whatſoever is from hence alledg'd, in favour of the *People*, the advantage will be ſtill greater on their ſide. Thus hath God promis'd the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit to all private men,

men, who ſincerely endeavour to find out the Truth; then much leſs will He be wanting to the Governours of his Church, to whom He hath committed the care of the Souls of thoſe private men, and given power even to confer the Holy Ghoſt. Are the Scriptures clear to them, much more to thoſe, whom the Son of God hath ſignaliz'd, and ſet apart for the Lights of the World? *Two Things* are uſually brought to hinder this Procedure: *Either that thoſe Promiſes of Aſſiſtance were made only to the Apoſtles; or elſe that they depend on the conditioned Righteouſneſs of Men.* Where, by the way, it may be Obſerv'd, that by the Firſt of theſe, the Claim of the People is utterly cut off; and by the Second, they have as ſmall Advantage.

But they who argue this, might do well to conſider, that this Objection may ſtrike at the very *Foundation of the Faith.* For, if thoſe promiſes of Aſſiſtance, which Chriſt made to his Church be Hypothetical; if they depend on the Performance of Men, then may the *Foundation totter*, the *Gates of Hell prevail*, *Chriſtianity decay*, and the *Goſpel* it ſelf be loſt out of the World, before the End thereof, notwithſtanding all Chriſt's fair promiſes to the contrary. If they had been confin'd only to the Apoſtles, the *Chriſtian Religion* had not long ſurviv'd its Author; every Martyrdom of an Apoſtle had pull'd down a Pillar of the Church, and by conſequence, the whole Fabrick muſt have fallen to the ground in the very firſt Century of our Lord.

Happy indeed had it been for Chriſtendom, that the Imperiouſneſs of ſome Modern Biſhops of *Rome* had not brought an *Odium*, though unjuſtly, upon Epiſcopacy in general, that their too much Lording it over the Flock, had not given Advantage to the Enemies of *Church-Authority*, and their challenging to themſelves at leaſt an indirect Power in Temporals, had not alarm'd the

the Kings of the Earth, to ſtand up, and take Counſel how they might deſtroy ſo dangerous an *Uſurpation* of the pretended Vicegerent of the *Lords Anointed*.

Happy had it been, if for the Support of their Secular Greatneſs, they had not wreſted the Scriptures to countenance ſuch *Doctrines*, as have no clear and ſolid Foundation therein; and that under pretence of making the *Church* all Glorious within, her Governours all Triumphant without, they had not defac'd Her Innocent *Beauty*, and made Her *Militant* in the worſt of Sences.

However, they can no way be excuſed, who think they can never be ſecure from *Papal Supremacy*, but by demoliſhing the *Evangelical Hierarchy*, and introducing a Presbyterian *Parity* into the *Catholick Church*; and to avoid the Neceſſity of having an Infallible Judge, leaving every private prepoſſeſſed Fancy to the *Perſpicuity of Scripture*, whereby men are often bewildred in a Labyrinth of Errors, ſeduc'd into thoſe by-paths which lead to the *Pit* of *Deſtruction*: For, notwithſtanding that Beam of Divine Light, which ſhines ſo bright in the Scriptures, it ſeems ſome men have Eyes either ſo weak, as to be dazled at the ſight of it, or elſe ſo blind with Pride or Malice, as not to perceive it; For St. *Peter* tells us, there are in the Scriptures ſome things hard to be underſtood, which unlearned and unſtable men wreſt unto their own Deſtruction: And therefore the Unlearned ſhould do well to conſult their Teachers; the Unſtable, thoſe that are ſound in the Faith; which brings me to my ſecond general Conſideration. *That though the Scriptures be clear in themſelves, yet Private men, abandoning their Guides, and following their own corrupt Fancies, may deprave and diſtort them to their own deſtruction.*

Who thoſe Wreſters were, or what thoſe δυσνόητα are, wherewith St. *Peter* chargeth the Epiſtles of his beloved Brother *Paul*, I ſhall not ſtrictly inquire; the Apoſtle

Apoſtle having paſs'd them over in a profound ſilence, it will be difficult at this diſtance of time exactly to define; yet 'tis not improbable, that either the *Gnoſtick*, or *Cerinthian Hereticks*, were here chiefly aim'd at, who upon a miſtake of ſome Predictions, became the Founders of a Temporal Dominion of Chriſt after His Reſurrection; wherein His Followers in their New *Jeruſalem*, ſhould wallow in ſenſual Luſts and Pleaſures, ſpend the ſpace of a Thouſand Years, as in a Nuptial Feſtivity, and enjoy the all that is in the World; the Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſts of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, in as ample and exquiſite a manner, as the moſt Epicurean Soul could effect or covet: A Fancy, in its firſt Original, meerly Jewiſh; afterwards entertain'd by ſome Judaizing Chriſtians; and finally, rather rectified than abandoned by ſome of the Fathers in the Primitive times. And if thoſe ſublime Wits, who had all the Learning which either *Jeruſalem*, *Athens*, or *Rome*, could boaſt, were nevertheleſs miſtaken in their Expoſitions of ſome abſtruſe Texts of Scripture [whilſt they deliver'd their Opinions but as private Doctors] what wonder, if the unlearned and unſtable wreſt them to their own Deſtruction?

That they have, *de facto*, done this, is manifeſt, ſince 'twill be hard to inſtance in any one *Century*, which is not either chargeable with new Hereſies, or the reviving and improving of old. And the moſt extravagant Opinions, which ever yet ſaw the light, have ſtill ſhrouded themſelves under the *Patronage of Holy Writ*. What ſhall we ſay then, ſhall we condemn the Scriptures of Sin? Shall we ſay, That the Scriptures are of themſelves either productive of Error, or not a ſufficient Store-houſe of Truth? God forbid. The Scriptures are Holy, Juſt, and Good, but private men wreſt them to their own Deſtruction. And this they do, Firſt, By

their *Ignorance*; Secondly, By their *Inſtability*.

I. Firſt, By their *Ignorance*: where it will be preſently objected; that Ignorance is ſo far from being a cauſe of Error, or Impiety, that, in a ſober ſence, 'tis truly the Mother of Devotion. The Wiſdom of this World is given in by *Tertullian*, as the prime Cauſe of Hereſie; None were greater Tormentors of the Scriptures than the Philoſophers; for which Reaſon they are branded by the ſame Author with the Title of Arch-Hereticks: Particularly the *Valentinian Hereſie*, concerning the portentous production of the Gods, comes from the *Platoniſts*; *Marcion's Unconcern'd, and Lazy God*, was firſt ſet up by the *Stoicks*; the Mortality of the Soul was the Doctrine of the *Epicureans*; the Impoſſibility of the *Reſurrection* of the Fleſh, of the whole ſtream of Philoſophers.

The Apoſtle tells us, Not many Mighty, not many Wiſe, not many Noble, were choſen: cautions his Proſelytes againſt Philoſophy and vain Deceit, and concludes the Wiſdom of this World, Fooliſhneſs with God. Wherefore, by Ἀμαθεῖς, Unlearned, in this place, we are not to underſtand *Ideots*, and thoſe who never knew Letters; but we muſt underſtand thoſe who will not be inſtructed by the *Maſters of Divine Wiſdom*, the *Nolentes diſcere*, thoſe who refuſe to hear the *Church of the Living God, which alone is the Pillar and Foundation of Truth*. And ſo their Learning, like *Julian's*, only qualifies them to deride the Doctrines of a Crucified God, and by their Wiſdom they become the more formidable Enemies of Chriſt's Kingdom.

Thus, if *Lucifer*, the Son of the Morning, fall from his Allegiance, whole *Legions* of the Heavenly Hoſt are involv'd in the Rebellion. That Hereſie ſpreads like the Contagion of a Leproſie, which hath an *Arrius* for its Founder, and a *Conſtantius* for its Promoter; And the

Mahumetan

Mahumetan Religion owes as well its monſtrous Birth, as its fatal Increaſe to the Malice and Cunning of an *Apoſtate Jew*, and a *Renegado Chriſtian*. And to give but one inſtance more, but of a far more Modern Date, and therefore of more dangerous conſequence; That unhappy man *Socinus*, a perſon otherwiſe of ſingular Wit and Learning; but being in this ſenſe unlearned, *i.e.* having entertain'd ſo ſlender a Notion of the Church, as to date a general Defection from the very Deaths of the Apoſtles; upon this Perſwaſion, thought it not *Robbery* to make himſelf equal to the moſt *Oecumenical Councils*, to contradict the moſt receiv'd *Doctrines* of the Church; and from this contempt of his Mother, to proceed to that daring pitch of impiety, as to deny even the Lord that bought him: ſo dangerous is it for private men to rely ſolely upon the perſpicuity of Scripture, or to meaſure the δυνάμει of the Incarnation of the Godhead, his Conſubſtantiality with the Father, by the ſcantling of Humane Reaſon. *Cedat curioſitas fidei, gloria ſaluti*, was the Advice of as great a Wit as any Age hath bred. Our Curioſity muſt give place to our Faith; the thirſt of Temporal Glory, to the benefits of Eternal Salvation.

'Tis true, by our Reaſon, we are firſt diſpos'd to be Chriſtians; for no Creature, beneath the Rational, is capable of Divine Revelation; but when once we have given up our Names to Chriſt, 'tis by our Faith we are ſaved: but if we aſſent to no Doctrines, but ſuch as our Reaſon fully comprehends, this is no longer Faith, but Science; and ſo we may continue Infidels, whilſt we go under the Notion of Chriſtians.

And ſince we live in ſuch a knowing Age, wherein all *captivating the Underſtanding*, though it be to the *Obedience of Faith*, is made the ſubject of Grievance and Complaint: And that we have to deal with men of ſuch

a ſceptical Genius, as that they do not only inquire into the Grounds and Reaſons of our Faith, but moreover deny our very *Creed*; with whom a *Treatiſe of Humane Reaſon* is of more Force, than the *Revelation of St. John the Divine*. To the Conſideration of theſe Men I offer *Two Things*, which I judge moſt proper.

I. Firſt, The Anſwer which *Origen* made to *Celſus*, when 'twas objected by that *Calumniator* againſt the Chriſtians, that their Religion was built on a very ſandy Foundation, which durſt not undergo the Teſt of Reaſon, but commanded its Converts not to Examine, but Believe, and their Faith ſhould Save them. In part he owns the Objection, but wiſely retorts it upon his Adverſary, by telling him, that the *Philoſophers* were the greateſt *Dictators* in the World: Witneſs the *Ipſe dixit* of *Pythagoras*, that their Syſtems contain'd ſome ſuch ſecret *Dogmata*, which their Diſciples ſwallowed ſolely upon the Credit of their Maſters. And if the Maſters of the Wiſdom of this World [which is either *Fooliſhneſs*, or at beſt, but *Science*, *falſly ſo called*] required ſo great ſubmiſſion from their Scholars, how much greater is to be given to thoſe Doctrines which are contain'd in the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, who were *Taught of God*, *and ſpake as they were inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt?*

II. Secondly, I urge the Authority of my Lord *Bacon*, whoſe, if any, methinks ſhould be admitted by theſe *Virtuoſi in Religion*; The Divine Prerogative, ſaith he, extends it ſelf to the whole Man; and requires not only *Obedience* from our Wills, but *Submiſſion* from our Underſtandings. And therefore, as we are bound to obey the Divine Law, though our Wills reluct never ſo much againſt it; ſo are we obliged to believe whatſoever God hath reveal'd, though never ſo improbable to our Underſtandings: For if we believe no more than what we

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can demonſtrate to be true, we do not believe the *Truth* deliver'd for the *Authors* ſake, but the *Author* for the *Truths* ſake; and ſo we pay no more Reſpect to the Oracles of God, than we do to the Writings of Men, though never ſo much ſuſpected by us. The Faith which juſtified *Abraham*, was converſant in a matter incredible to Reaſon: And therefore the higher the *Myſteries of Religion* are above our Reaſon, the greater is the exerciſe and triumph of our Faith, and the Honour done unto God in Believing. To conclude this Point, Great is the uſe of *Reaſon* in *Religion*, both as to the manner of interpreting the Scriptures, and the deducing true Conſequences, and wholeſom Concluſions from thence; and if it be wholly ſuppreſs'd, our Religion will degenerate into Superſtition; we ſhall be ſo far from paying God a *Reaſonable Service*, that we ſhall offer Him the *Sacrifice of Fools*. But then it muſt be kept to a due temper: for, if it be not managed by prudent *Guides*, 'tis apt to grow wild and extravagant, to hurry us on to a Belief of the *Fouleſt Impoſtures*, to a Practice of the *Groſſeſt Impieties*, which either the prevalency of the World, the domineering Enmity of the Fleſh, or the implacable Malice of Satan, can propound to be believed or practis'd.

II. The ſecond Reaſon of private Mens falling into Error, is their *Inſtability* in not adhering to their Guides; but forſaking them to go aſtray in the intricate paths of Error and Deceit. Hereſie being nothing elſe but an Exciſion from, and Diſobedience to the Church in points of *Faith*. And therefore the Apoſtle pronounceth an Heretick *Self-condemned*; one who hath wantonly choſen to himſelf thoſe Opinions, for an obſtinate Defence whereof, after full and plain means of Conviction, he juſtly falls under the Cenſures of the Church, is Excommunicated the Aſſembly of the Saints; and ſo without

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Repentance and *Reconciliation* continues in a very dangerous eſtate, if that of *Heathens* and *Publicans* be acknowledg'd ſuch.

Not in vain then are thoſe frequent *Cautions* againſt Falling away, thoſe repeated *Admonitions* to Perſeverance, thoſe earneſt *Exhortations* to hold faſt the Profeſſion, and contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd; thoſe ſo much inculcated *Commands* of obeying thoſe who are ſet Over us in the Lord, *Heb.* 13. 7. *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you the Word of God, whoſe Faith follow.* Ver. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves, for they watch for your Souls.* For in vain may thoſe men commit themſelves to the immediate Aſſiſtance of God, who neglect to hear his *Guides*; and violate His Commandments, in hopes to procure His help and favour: For, from that very moment of time, they ceaſe to be Members of the *Holy Catholick Church*, they are become *Out-lawries* in a *Goſpel-ſenſe*, they have loſt the *Protection* of the *Heavenly King*, and they lay under the *Deprivation* of the Benefits belonging to the Subjects of that *Jeruſalem* which is above.

And what wonder, if being in this forlorn condition the Tempter take his advantage, lead them into the Wilderneſs, and there preſent to their diſturb'd Fancies falſe Schemes of Religion, ſuggeſt unworthy apprehenſions of God; and whatſoever is by him thus ſuggeſted, is by them miſtaken for new Light and holy Inſpirations.

And becauſe this Spirit of Deluſion dares put forth, among Chriſtians, no Doctrines but ſuch as pretend to be founded on the *Scriptures*: to this purpoſe they are *wreſted and tortur'd*, their *Scope* is miſtaken, their *Senſe* abuſed, their *Periods* miſerably mangled, their whole *Deſign* perverted to countenance every *Wild Opinion*, which

which either a *capricious Fancy can imagine*, or a *malicious Wit invent*. And from hence it comes to paſs, that we have as many ſeveral ſorts of Chriſtians as there are different Humors or Intereſts of men; and the Goſpel with St. *Paul*, though in a quite contrary ſenſe, is become all things unto all men.

And having made thus bold with the *Scriptures*, it cannot be expected that they ſhould deal more modeſtly with any Authority inferiour to that; the moſt ancient Traditions muſt now give place to new Diſcoveries. The Conſent of the Catholick Apoſtolick Church be born down by the *Dictates* of a private, I might ſay, familiar Spirit. Whereas there is all the reaſon in the World to believe that the Apoſtles beſt knew the mind of their Maſter, that they faithfully and fully communicated their knowledge to their Succeſſors, and ſo by certain ſteps and degrees we may arrive at this fundamental Truth: *That as the Church is the moſt faithful Keeper*, ſo the moſt *authentick Expoſitor of Scripture*. Which fairly uſhers in my third and laſt Conſideration. *That for the preventing Miſtakes from riſing, and ſuppreſſing Errors when riſen, 'Tis the duty of Private Men to ſubmit their Judgments, in matters of Religion, to the Determinations of thoſe whom God hath Conſtituted to be their Spiritual Guides and Governours; unleſs it manifeſtly appear, That ſuch Determinations are contrary to Gods Word.* And this I ſhall aſſert very briefly both from the Qualifications of the Perſons who are appointed to Rule in the Church, and the Reaſon of the thing.

I. And that which firſt entitles the *Governours* of the Church to a *Superiority* over their *Subjects*, is that ſpecial *Ordination* and *Commiſſion*, which they have receiv'd from Chriſt, to inſtruct the World in all neceſſary Truths, and that Charge which he hath laid upon others to obey them. If any one liſteth to ſee their *Commiſſion*, he

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may find it recorded in any of the four Evangeliſts. I ſhall exhibit it, as 'tis exemplified *Matt.* 28. 18, 19, 20. *And Jeſus came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All power is given to me in Heaven and Earth: Go ye therefore, and Teach all Nations, Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have Commanded you: And lo, I am with You always unto the end of the World.* In which words there are theſe Three Things conſiderable: 1. That Chriſt commiſſion'd His Diſciples immediately after He had proclaim'd Himſelf Omnipotent. 2. That this Commiſſion implies it to be Chriſt's Will, that all Nations of the World ſhould obey them. 3. That He promiſed to be with Them and their Succeſſors, unto the end of the World. And there cannot be a fuller inſtance, of the Perverſneſs of ſome Men, who, to evacuate and overthrow the Authority of the preſent Church, will needs confine συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος to ſome period of time, ſhort of the final *diſſolution* of all things, when time ſhall be ſwallow'd up of *Eternity*; if not contrary to the Grammatical ſenſe of the Word, yet at leaſt to the deſign of the Promiſe, and the nature of the Thing.

Which of the Ambaſſadours of earthly Potentates ever received ſo ample a Commiſſion? the Perſon commiſſioning was Omnipotent. The Commiſſion was univerſal in reſpect of Perſons, Time and Place; 'twas directed to all the Nations, and to continue throughout all the Ages of the World, and for the Execution of it they were empowr'd from above; whereſoever they came, they conſtituted a Spiritual Government, and they had full Power to Enact ſuch Laws as they thought tended to the Advancement of their *Maſters Kingdom*; and they did with *Authority*, and not by way of Counſel only, as ſome would have, determine ſuch Controverſies as aroſe, *It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to Us.*

All along their Spiritual progreſs, if any City refus'd

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to receive Them, or their *Doctrine*, they ſhook off the duſt off their Feet againſt it, as a direful Preſage of ſome enſuing Judgment, as the next words manifeſtly declare; *Verily I ſay unto you, It ſhall be more tolerable for* Sodom *and* Gomorrha *in the day of Judgment, than for that City.* Wretched City! how has thy Diſobedience aſcertain'd, and aggrandiz'd thy Ruine. The lewd Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* ſhall find more Favour in the day of Judgment, than thy Citizens. Moſt true it is, their Power was purely Spiritual: Chriſt, the Prince of Peace, did not commiſſion Generals to deſtroy, but ſent forth Apoſtles to convert the Nations, by declaring His Laws, and denouncing His Judgments. But then they had no coercive Power of the Sword, which God hath given to Magiſtrates, to inflict the Judgments which they denounc'd. But as they, becauſe living under Heathen Powers, left the Event of their Spiritual *Cenſures* ſolely to the Divine Vengeance, [which they who eſcap'd in this World, were ſure to meet with in the next]; ſo is it ſtill, unleſs *Kings* are graciouſly pleaſed to ſhew themſelves *Nurſing Fathers to the Church*, to enforce Spiritual Cenſures by Corporal Penalties, and adjudge thoſe Unworthy the Protection of the Laws of the Realm, who are juſtly depriv'd of the Benefits of the Church. By all which it appears, that the Church is ſomething elſe, than a *Chriſtian Commonwealth*, ſince there was a Church before the Commonwealth became Chriſtian; and neither the *Leviathan*, nor any of his Diſciples, hath yet been able to ſhew, how, or when the Church forfeited Her antecedent Right: And that though the Governours thereof may challenge to themſelves a Power diſtinct, yet no ways oppoſite to the Civil; The *Shield of Faith* doth not claſh with the *Sword of Juſtice*. And maugre the deſigns of thoſe, who have Evil will at *Sion*, this is not to erect *Imperium in imperio*, much leſs

to ſet the *Mitre* above the *Crown*: Since whatſoever Power, is here challenged as of Divine Right, is purely Spiritual, exercis'd to Spiritual ends and purpoſes; ſo far from interfering with the *Civil*, from Abſolving men from that Obedience, which is indiſpenſably due thereunto; that whereſoever it takes place, it abates nothing of that natural Right which the Magiſtrate had in the Affairs of Religion: Yet herein it will appear, that the Wiſdom of the deſpiſed King of the *Jews*, did far ſurmount all the Policies of the World; in that he hath ſo interwoven the Concerns of His *Church* with the Intereſt of the *State*, that at the ſame time any man ſhall dare to become an *Enemy to his Kingdom*, he muſt ceaſe to be a *Friend to Cæſars*.

II. The reaſonableneſs of this Submiſſion will appear from thoſe promiſes of Aſſiſtance, which Chriſt hath made to them, but not to others without them; much leſs to others againſt them: And thoſe are *Illumination*, *Direction* and *Power*. Illumination, in things Obſcure; Direction, in things Difficult; Power, to encounter, and overcome all Oppoſition.

And this may be one Reaſon, why *Chriſt* did not Arm his Diſciples with a Temporal Sword; for certainly He, who had all Power given Him in Heaven, and on Earth, might have done it, if He had pleas'd, becauſe He furniſh'd them with ſuch *Extraordinary Virtues*, as did abundantly ſupply the defect of that. Thus they who could raiſe the *Dead* from the *Grave*, needed no other Argument to gain the *Living*. They who could convince the Conſciences, captivate the Underſtandings, beat down the Imaginations, and conquer the Affections of their Adverſaries, needed no Sword, nor Spear, nor any of the Bloody Engines of War, to make themſelves Maſters of the Field.

Now the ſame *Spirit*, though not in the ſame *Meaſure*, doth

doth ſtill reſide in the Governors of the *Church*: though they do not equalize the Apoſtles in working of Miracles, diverſities of Languages, extent of Juriſdiction; though they have not, as they had, the whole World for their Dioceſs; yet are they ſtill *Biſhops of Souls*; *Paſtors, and Doctors for the Conſummation of the Saints, for the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, unto a perfect man in Chriſt Jeſus.* Either then let Private men ſubmit to their Spiritual Governours; exerciſing their *Commiſſion* according to God's Word; or elſe let them warrant their Diſſent with greater, at leaſt equal Atteſtations of the Divine Favour; and then there will be no great fear of any danger ariſing from Diſſenting Brethren.

III. The reaſonableneſs of this Submiſſion will appear from their Study and Learning in Divine Matters, and from the far leſs Knowledge and ordinary Capacity in others. The Apoſtles, they had their Knowledge of Divine things, either from a conſtant and familiar converſe with their Maſter, or elſe from that plentiful Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, which He vouchſafed them immediately upon His Reſtauration to His Heavenly Kingdom.

That which was thus wonderfully beſtowed upon them, their Succeſſors are forc'd to acquire, by *hard Study, great Induſtry, frequent* and *fervent Addreſs* to the *Fountain of Wiſdom.* For, not only the *Knowledge of Languages*, a *Calmneſs of Mind*, neither ruffled with the ſtorms of Paſſion, nor diſtracted with the Cares of the World; but likewiſe a *piercing Judgment*, to diſtinguiſh between the Literal and Figurative ſenſe, to weigh the ſcope and coherence of things, to compare one place with another, to illuſtrate obſcure Texts, by thoſe which are more plain, to conſult, and find out the ſenſe of Antiquity, is required to a right underſtanding of the Scri-

ptures: For they do not only contain things of themſelves hard to be underſtood; but moreover, thoſe very things are rendred more difficult, by the *Malice of Satan*, and the *Cunning of his Agents*. The Enemy hath ſown ſuch a prodigious quantity of *Tares*, that 'tis very hard ſometimes to find out the *Wheat*: What wonder then, if ſuch a ſpawn of Monſtrous Opinions flow from the Scriptures falling either into prophane hands, or being interpreted by a private, ſelf-conceited, and unruly Spirit? If St. *Paul*, who was caught up into the third Heavens, and was even oppreſs'd with *Revelations*; nevertheleſs cryes out, as well for the *Difficulty*, as the *Dignity* of his *Function*, Who is ſufficient for theſe things? Then certainly it can be no Diſparagement to the *Laity*, however quick-ſighted they may be in other Affairs, to ſuppoſe them not ſuch competent Judges here, as thoſe of the Clergy are. And indeed, we hear of very few, though never ſuch Deſpiſers of the dull Clergy in their life-time, but are very willing to admit of their advice and aſſiſtance when they come to *Dye*.

IV. Fourthly and laſtly, The neceſſity of this Submiſſion appears, as 'tis the only means to reſtore Peace and Unity to the Church; Happineſs and Tranquillity to the State, how ineffectual the ſeveral Projects of *Comprehenſion*, *Toleration*, unwarrantable *Compliance* have proved to effect the *Work of Coalition*: I mean to Compoſe thoſe *Differences*, and Unite thoſe *Diviſions* which ſo furiouſly *Rage* among us; we either are, or 'tis to be feared, by ſad Experience, may be Taught.

Theſe *Projects* can only lay claim to an imaginary Happineſs, and however plauſible they may ſeem in the Notion, yet may they prove dangerous in thePractice, at leaſt, not attain the ends for which they were deſign'd. For, in truth, as well may we expect *To gather Grapes from Thorns*, or *Figs from Thiſtles*, as that a *Toleration*

ration of Diſagreements, ſhould produce the bleſſed Fruits of Peace and Concord. Theſe are Contraries, and deſtroy each other.

Now, what other *Expedient* have we left but the Reſtoring, and Aſſerting the *Diſcipline of the Church.*: That ſo they, who will neither *Hold the Faith, nor keep a good Conſcience, by being deliver'd up to Satan, may learn, at leaſt, not to blaſpheme.* Many and grievous are the Guilts, which are charg'd upon the Church of *Rome*; yet ſuch is the *Exactneſs* of Her *Diſcipline*, and the *Obedience* of *Her Sons* and *Daughters*, conſequent upon it, as hath hitherto preſerv'd Her from Ruine. Now, if our Fears of the Increaſe of *Popery*, be as real, as they are pretended, methinks it ſhould be no ill Policy to learn Wiſdom from our Adverſaries; for that which preſerves a *Corrupted Church* from Falling, in all likelihood will make a *Pure One* to Flouriſh.

However, we are little the better for being deliver'd from the *Slaveries* of an Implicit Faith, and Foreign *Superſtition*, if we run into *Licentiouſneſs*, *Infidelity*, and *Irreligion* at Home. For, who is ſo blind as not to ſee that Irreverence and Diſreſpect for the *Lord's Clergy*, hath been accompanied with a manifeſt *Decay of Piety*, and a notorious Contempt of the moſt Eſſential Parts of *Religion?* That want of Submiſſion, to the Juſt and Pious *Determinations of the Church*, no leſs Juſtly and Piouſly ratified and eſtabliſhed by the *King* and *State*, hath given Birth to ſuch monſtrous Variety of Opinions, as hath ſcarce left any Fundamental of the Faith unqueſtion'd, if not denied; *Atheiſm* creeping in by inſenſible degrees, from indulging too great a Latitude in Matters of Religion.

And now in the Cloſe of All, Let every Man ſeriouſly conſider with himſelf the *Hainouſneſs and Danger of Schiſm*; and the *bleſſed Effects* of *Obedience.*

The

The Danger of Schism, in that it breaks the precious *Unity of the Church*, alienates the Affections of the *Members* thereof. Who, as they have but one *Faith*, so they should have but one *Soul*. And so instead of *Love*, *Joy*, *Peace*, *Long-suffering*, *Forbearance*, *Meekness*, *Temperance*, those lovely Fruits of the Spirit, which adorn private Men, and secure the publick Peace, there arise *Hatred*, *Variance*, *Emulation*, *Wrath*, *Strife*, *Evil Surmising*, *Sedition*, *Heresies*, *Murders*; those ugly Works of the Flesh, which dissolve the Bonds of Society, and exclude Men from the Kingdom of God. How that the *Schismatick* is arrested with Fears and Jealousies from without, when he considers his Sin of Disobedience against those whom the Lord hath set over him, and the *Dreadfulness* of the Churches Censures, when justly incurr'd for his Disobedience. How that he is tormented with sad and uncomfortable Reflections from within; being *Unstable in all his Ways*, *ever learning*, *but never coming to the Knowledge of the Truth*; but being abandon'd to the *Delusions* of a *Private Spirit*, he is miserably toss'd to and fro with every Wind of *Doctrine*, till at length he makes an Eternal *Shipwrack* of the *Faith*.

On the contrary, the blessed Effects of *Obedience*; how the Humble Christian, by an happy Resignation of his Judgment, there where our Lord seems to demand it, enjoys a perpetual Peace, and Freedom from Dispute, together with all his Fellow-Members of the same *Mystical Body*. As for those great *Mysteries of Godliness*, which concern his Salvation, though they are above his Reason, yet not above his Faith; and he had rather rely on the Churches Decisions of them, when he finds no place of Scripture plainly contrary to such Decisions, than either give way to his own *Curiosity*, or heed to the *Disputers* of this *World*, lest he should thereby *wrest them to his own Destruction*. And this he thinks he may do with

with leſs trouble to himſelf, and greater aſſurance of the Truth, and ſo he continues ſound in the Faith, without being skill'd in thoſe unhappy Controverſies, in which the *Diſputers* of this World have involv'd it.

And this *Harmony* of *Faith* and *Doctrine* is always accompanied with an entire League, and Union of Charity, [that common Badge by which Chriſtians were once diſtinguiſh'd from the reſt of the World] and a Bleſſed *Uniformity* of God's Publick Worſhip and Service, whereby the Members of the *Church Militant*, in ſome ſort, reſemble the *Saints* of the *Church Triumphant*.

In a Word, in this Obedience, the Humble Chriſtian goes on ſecurely, and chearfully, in the *Ways of God's Commandments*; And inſtead of troubling his Head with the δυσνόητα of Religion, practiſeth thoſe plain, but moſt important Duties of *Godlineſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Sobriety*; which will render his Life happy here, and crown him with Eternal *Felicity* hereafter.

FINIS.